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UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH

FRANCINE PYLE ROBINSON

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PUBLISHERS BOSTON

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"A book of verses underneath the bough,
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine, and thou
Beside me, singing in the wilderness
Ah, wilderness were pardise enow!"

—OMAR KHAYYAM

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UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH

REMEMBRANCE

When I shall have forgotten all the wealth
    Of beauty, and the radiance that glows
In every lovely jewel, and in the heart
    Of every crimson rose —
When I shall have forgotten all the light
    Of myriad stars that shine in summer skies,
Still in my memory I'll keep undimmed,
    The beauty of your eyes.

When I shall have forgotten all the joy
    And balm of soul that precious music brings—
The melody of harps, and all the soft
    Sweet sound of muted strings;
When I shall have forgotten all the notes
    Of golden-throated singers — clear and strong
Above all else, I'll hear in memory
    The music of your song.

NOSTALGIA

I knew you could not furl your spirit's wings —
Such eager, tireless wings! — and be content
Within the well-worn grooves so much beloved
By lesser men; nay, from the first 'twas meant
That you should wander over trackless wastes
And virgin lands, where hidden dangers lie;
For you the unknown held a potent lure.
Glory and fame have come to you, while I
(They speak of me as being fond of home!)
Have lived my life within this narrow space,
A house and garden, while my lonely heart
And homesick soul have followed you apace
Into the far-flung outposts of the world,
Fearing those perils that I may not share;
My spirit's home is on the burning sands
Or on the frozen wastes, since you are there.
No mighty deeds are mine to bring renown,
My lonely portion, it must be to wait —
And yet because of you my tasks, dull-hued
And gray, seem almost roseate.

TRYST

I come to you, love, at the garden gate,
    I come to our trysting place, my dear,
Where, lonely, you patiently watch and wait —
    And I speak to your heart, though you may not
        hear.
I see in your eyes the shine of tears,
    And "Gloriana" I hear you say;
You may not know through the arid years,
    How I walk beside you all the way.

"Gloriana, you have not come!"
    I am here, my own, though you may not see,
I speak to your heart though my lips are dumb,
    I am close—so close—while you weep for me.
I bring to your soul enduring peace
    And a knowledge of things you may not prove;
I bring you joy that shall never cease:
    In earth and Heaven, all is love.

You list to the murmur of wind in the trees,
    You raise your eyes to the summer moon,
You smile as at tender memories
    Of a night like this in another June.
In the murmuring leaves you hear my voice,
    My kiss is the night-wind when day is done;
Smile, my own, let your heart rejoice,
    In earth and Heaven, all things are one.

HAUNTED

My House of Life is haunted,
And ghosts are walking there —
I hear the trailing of their robes,
Their footsteps on the stair.
They cluster round about me
At night when all is still,
And on my heart they seem to lay
Their fingers, icy-chill.
A strain of ghostly music
Falls on my listening ear,
It is a phantom melody,
The notes are soft yet clear.
My House of Life is haunted
With ghosts of long-dead days,
When you were here, and all my joy
I found in your sweet praise.
My ghosts must walk forever,
And always there will be
That plaintive haunting melody
Of a song you sang to me.

HOME

I crave no ancient palace, turret-spired,
    And marble halls have no appeal for me;
I want no villa set in cypress trees
    Beside the sapphire sea.

Whether I have a home upon the earth,
    Or but a foot-hold on the farthest star;
It matters not if you are there for me,
    For Home is where you are.

ARMISTICE DAY

O brave and gallant souls who died that we
    Might find the path to everlasting peace,
Today we pledge once more to keep the faith —
    We say with one acclaim that war shall cease.
For you the terror and the pain are past,
    You've reached safe harbor; but while poppies
        blow
Crimson as blood beneath the shining sky,
    Never again such gallant lads shall know
The anguish that you suffered. Nevermore
    Shall mothers' hearts be broken as they break
Today, O gallant sons, remembering you
    Who sleep in Flanders Fields no more to wake.
You have not died in vain — the faith we'll keep —
    Sleep on beneath the wooden crosses — sleep!

DEAD ROSES

Dead petals in a Delft-blue bowl
    Are all that remain to me
Of roses that bloomed on a summer day
    Long ago, when you sang to me
A tender song of the roses
    That flowered in Picardy.

Dead petals! But still their fragrance clings,
    And still in my memory
There echoes the song of the roses
    You sang that day to me:
"The rose I keep within my heart
    Dies not in Picardy."

"FOR GOD AND KING"

(In Memory of Captain Robert Falcon Scott)

Through all the ages and in every clime
    Cheerfully men have died at duty's call;
Died for their king and country, mid the harsh
    And dreadful din of battle, heroes all.
But what of you who died in that white land
    Beneath the world? For you, whose valor stirred
All hearts, and wrested victory from defeat,
    For you, hero is but a feeble word.
Who can portray that anguished halting march?
    Tortured with cold, half-blinded by the snow,
You fought your losing battle with the storm,
    And cheered your comrades as their strength ebbed low.
Helpless you watched while Death's compelling hand
    Touched your companions' lips to silence; then
What depths of bitterness you must have known!
    A cup of such dark sorrow as few men
Have quaffed. No voice could fall upon your ear,
    Only the shrieking storm — the ghoulish moan
Of maddened winds; and yet you knew no fear,
    But calmly lay, waiting to die alone.

"For God and King!" No touch of vain regret
Was in your heart; perhaps you mused awhile
With longing, on those fields and hedges green
You might not see again; then, with a smile
Upon your lips, you died. Because of you,
Men walk with prouder step. "For God and King!"
No fear was in your heart, because you knew
What lay beyond; you knew that Death would fling
Open the door to worlds unknown, undreamed —
A universe for your adventuring.

ECLIPSE

Earth, traveling its lawful course between the worlds,
Owes all its life, its joy and warmth and light,
To that great orb we call the sun, whose face,
Turned towards or from us, gives us day and night.
But from the silvery pathway of the stars
Comes the pale moon, and for a little space,
Endowed with but a temporary power,
Obliterates the sun's effulgent face.
The hush of twlight broods — the stars appear —
The darkness falls, mysterious shadows creep,
The little birds, bewildered at a day
So brief, prepare again to sleep.
Just as the moon comes 'twixt earth and the sun,
So you have wiped out all my joy and light —
The sun will shine again and will dispel
Earth's shadows with its rays so warm and bright,
But since you cannot love me I must walk
Through all my days in everlasting night.

SERENADE

Night is sweeping her jewelled train
    Over the carpet of the sky;
The nightingale sings a lilting strain
    On a branch of the mock-orange tree near-by.

The jasmine flowers are waxen-white;
    (You're as sweet, my love, as the jasmine flower!)
Lady Moon drops her fairy light
    Where Rosalie sleeps in her virgin bower.

Wherever in dream-born paths you rove,
    (Smile in your slumber, my Rosalie!)
I would send you the gift of my full heart's love,
    On the wings of my soaring melody.

I will sing my song till the night grows late,
    (In your sleep you may hear it, and dream of me,)
The nightingale sings to his gentle mate,
    And I sing to you, sweet my Rosalie.

APRIL

Dewdrops sparkling on the grass,
    Sunshine everywhere;
Violets, nodding as you pass,
    Perfume all the air.
Robins singing in the trees,
    Voicing joy and cheer;
Every breath that stirs the breeze
    Says that Spring is here.

MAY

April's capricious tears have given way
To all the glad heart-warming smiles of May,
And with the coming of the welcome spring
The earth is rich with sudden blossoming.
The tulips flaunt their beauty red and bold;
The jonquils lift their cups of fairy gold
Up toward the lovely azure of the sky
Where clouds, like drifts of snow, are gliding by.
At dawn, dew-drenched, the purple lilacs fling
Afar their spicy fragrance of the spring,
And waking birds their joyous matins sing.
'Tis spring! Rejoice! The world is bright and gay —
But in my heart this warm and sunny May,
I feel November's chill, with You away.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

In your grave eyes, so gentle and so tired,
And in your face by pain so sharply lined,
One reads the deep compassion that you felt
For all the ghastly struggles of Mankind.
You did not prate of wickedness and sin
Because your wide-flung vision glimpsed the way —
O, weary way! — Mankind has traveled since
His life first dawned one prehistoric day.

Your great heart ached with pity for the times
Weak Man has fallen low, only to rise
Once more, and groping blindly, stumble on,
His dogged face set toward the glowing skies.
Thus far he has progressed — and when you looked
Back o'er the toilsome path Man's feet have trod,
You saw it led forever upward — yes,
And will lead upward till he reaches God.

THE FORSAKEN INN

It stands on the summit of a hill,
    Shorn of its pristine grace,
With windows like blind and staring eyes
    In a gray and wrinkled face.
In the garden, the weeds are rank and high,
    Where flowers used to grow;
All is ruin, where beauty and joy
    Reigned in the long ago.

Here in the past the young and fair
    Made happy holiday,
With merry jests and laughter and song,
    The hours were blithe and gay.
They waltzed to the strains of the "Blue Danube,"
    They danced the Minuet —
Where are they all, the young and fair,
    Are they living — and loving — yet?

They whispered many a tender vow
    Under the sheltering trees,
And now those smiling lips are dust,
    And their kisses but memories.
For Time, with ever-remorseless hand,
    Has shifted the merry scene;
There is only darkness and decay,
    Where light and love have been.

* * * *

It stands on the summit of a hill,
In the sunset's softening glow,
And I think it dreams in the twilight hour,
Of the days of long ago.

COEUR DE LION

(To Commander Richard Evelyn Byrd)

Of those brave men who sought to conquer earth,
    Not one possessed a more intrepid soul
Than he who sails away with that unknown
    And dread Antarctic desert as his goal.
Accustomed paths could hold no lure for him;
    He sees chill fingers beckon from that land
Where pallid Death rides on the snowy blast,
    And in his ears there rings the old command
"Subdue the earth!" For him those walls of ice
    Up-flung against a grim and cruel sky
Can hold no terror; pain and death will yield
    To courage so sublime, and pass him by.
His eyes will see what man has never seen,
    His feet will tread where man has never trod;
The agonizing search that leads him far
    From human ken, will lead him near to God.
For in his tranquil eyes and winning smile,
    One reads the age-old secret he has learned:
Forgetting self, the higher Self is won,
    Only by giving all, true peace is earned.
And as he sails away with valiant heart
    That direst perils never have dismayed,
A ghostly convoy gathers round the ship —
    The glorious company of the Unafraid.

REQUIESCAT

(In memory of Floyd Bennett)

His brave self-sacrifice has left his country
So much the poorer; for 'tis lives like this
That fill the world with everlasting beauty;
He builded well a noble edifice
Of character; no thought of self could ever
Hinder his holding out an eager hand
To those in need of help; his kindly nature
So full of sympathy, could understand
The souls of men. Unfaltering in his duty,
Gallant and brave, a rare and loyal friend,
Such selflessness deserves the peace of Heaven,
And he will find it at his journey's end.
He gave his last great gift, his life, for others,
As did the One who died upon a cross;
Heaven will be the richer for his passing,
As earth will be the poorer for his loss.

"THAT YE LOVE ONE ANOTHER —"

O, gentle many-sorrowed man of peace,
    Who tried to set men's feet in paths of love,
When, anguish-browed, you knelt and breathed a
        prayer
    Wry-lipped and bitter, in that silent grove —

If some pre-vision could have been revealed
    Of all the controversy and the strife
That have endured these twenty centuries,
    Anent, O gentle Christ, your blameless life,

Such added mead of woe would have been yours,
    Kneeling alone in dark Gethsemane,
Would you have had the courage to go on,
    And die, thorn-crowned, that death on Calvary?

What matter though we may not really know
    Whether your birth were human or divine —
Whether you were the only son of God,
    Or if you turned the water into wine?

If we had never tried so hard to read
    An esoteric meaning in your speech,
Had heeded well your simple earnest words,
    And learned the lesson that you tried to teach,

We had no need of cloister or of church,
    Of monastery, ritual, or creed;
You taught the only way — man's brotherhood —
    To love each other, that is all we need.

NOCTURNE

The moon, that great magician,
    Has spread upon my lawn
A shining silver carpet
    For elves to dance upon;
I hear the fairy music,
    And fairy laughter too;
At times, from tiny golden cups,
    They quench their thirst in dew.

The shapely slender poplars
    Lift their dark spires on high,
As though endeavoring to touch
    The jewel-sprinkled sky.
Like Brobdingnagian snowflakes
    The white magnolias gleam;
The shadows dance and quiver
    Like creatures in a dream.

A thousand subtle perfumes
    Pervade the summer air,
As though the spice of Araby
    Had lent its perfume rare.
All through the night's enchantment
    The elves dance on my lawn,
Till in the eastern sky appears
    The first pink flush of dawn.

OCTOBER

October is a bonny lass,
    Her eyes are dark and glowing;
Undereath a scarlet cap
    Her soft brown hair is flowing.

October's cheeks are warm and red,
    Her lips are smiling brightly;
Adown the lanes and woodland paths
    October's feet trip lightly.

Around her waist a yellow sash —
    Her arms with fruit are laden;
She comes dispensing joy and cheer,
    October — bonny maiden.

CHRISTMAS SHOPPING

The windows are filled with silver and gold
    And jewels — a rich display —
Velvet and laces and costly furs —
    What shall I buy today?
My purse is heavy with golden coins,
    Yet none is so poor as I —
For with poignant pain I long in vain
    For the gift that I cannot buy.

There are blood-red rubies and milk-white pearls
    And diamonds like frozen fire,
But for jewels and laces and costly gifts
    I feel no thrill of desire.
If all the wealth of the world were mine,
    Still none were so poor as I —
With all else beside, the one gift denied
    Is the love that I cannot buy.

THANKSGIVING

Not because of opulence
    Do I give thanks, O Lord —
Not for wealth of worldly goods
    Or cupboards richly stored.
But for birds, and trees, and flowers,
    Green fields and skies of blue,
The mist upon the mountains
    With sunshine breaking through;
For all the songs the larks sing
    At dawning, sweet and clear,
For all the strains of music
    That greet the listening ear,
For all the wealth and beauty
    With which the earth is stored,
Deep in my heart this festal day,
    I do give thanks, O Lord.

SEA SONG

"Never love a sailor,"
My mother said to me,
"For you will strain your pretty eyes,
A-looking out to sea.

"And when his ship comes sailing home,
He'll scarcely step ashore
Before he's sailing off again
To Spain or Singapore."

But I have loved a sailor —
He's gay and debonair,
With wide sea spaces in his eyes,
And sea-spray in his hair.

Enchanting is his laughter,
Deep as his own deep sea;
His soft words weave a fairy spell,
A spell that falls on me.

I have loved a sailor,
His hands are brown and strong,
And just the size to keep my heart
Safe a whole life long.

I have loved a sailor,
    And when he sails the sea,
Where'er he goes he leaves his heart
    Safe at home with me.

A PORTRAIT

Exquisite lady, tall and very fair,
What words of mine can paint your loveliness?
You seem a queen who walks with royal air
Through corridors of old-world palaces.
You bring back golden dreams one can't forget,
Of dear old-fashioned gardens, filled with all
The fairest flowers — rose and mignonette,
And hollyhocks a-blooming by the wall.
You seem too sweet by far for all the rush
Of living in these noisy modern days;
You seem to walk amid the dreamy hush
Of olden, better times and gentler ways.
Your mystic smile that flashes forth and dies,
The essence holds, of all that's pure and good;
The chaste glance of your sweet uplifted eyes
Reveals the charm of perfect womanhood.

THE FROZEN FOUNTAIN

Majestic the frozen fountain stands
    Under the winter sky,
Like a giant spectre still and cold
    With thin arms lifted high.
Glittering arc lights, row on row,
    Strike fire from its robes of white,
And a thousand jewels seem to glow
    With a crimson and orange light.
Patient the frozen fountain stands,
    Waiting the sun-warmed spring,
Waiting to throw off its garb of ice,
    And sparkle and play and sing.

LITTLE BOY O' MINE

My mind goes back through the weary years
To a day in the long ago —
When you were a lad and life was glad,
Boy o' mine, and I loved you so.

I can see you now as I saw you then,
Though the bitter tears will start;
And the house is still, but the merry trill
Of your laughter sounds in my heart.

I can see the smile in your deep blue eyes,
And the glint of your sunny hair,
And I thrilled with joy, dear little boy,
At your resolute kingly air.

So gallant you were, little boy o' mine,
And I saw again and again,
With a glow of pride, how bravely you tried
To smile through the tears of pain.

What a great good man you were going to be
In the wondrous future I planned,
But my long life through I never knew
The touch of your clinging hand.

For your spirit was never clothed in flesh,
(It was only my heart that knew),
You were only a dream, little Boy o' mine,
A dream that never came true.

TO A MUSICIAN

Although I do not know to what far land
Adventure may have beckoned you, nor when —
If ever — it shall be our paths may cross,
Or if our hands shall lightly touch again
In token of our friendship — this I know:
Your gentle presence is as warmly real
As this sweet summer sunshine that I feel
Upon my cheek. It seems so long ago
Since I have seen your fingers touch the strings
Of your loved violin — invoking then
Music beyond my vain imaginings.
Although no more I listen to those strains,
I know they are not lost, for when I hear
The robin's lilt, the zephyr's trembling sigh,
They echo your sweet song and bring you near.

A THOUGHT

Dear, I do not ask you to remember
The old sweet past, for memory brings pain;
The warmth of June won't last until December,
The bliss of youth will never come again.

Yet still I hope that in your heart, though hidden,
Will be a tender thought for other hours,
That memories will sometimes rise unbidden,
Fragrant and faint as scent of dying flowers.

My only joy is knowing of your gladness,
And all my days are filled with dreams of you—
Forget me, dear, if memory brings sadness;
But do not ask that I forget you too!

THE MASTER VIOLINIST

On you the gods bestowed a magic gift,
And when your fingers touch each waiting string,
Your violin acquires a soul that speaks
In tones that set our heart-strings quivering.
We marvel at each perfect golden note
Transcending all our mundane harmony,
It seems the very music of the stars
Reverberates in your rich melody.

We listen with a joy that's almost pain
Too great to bear — while every hope and fear
Man's heart has known — his passion and his love —
Comes ringing forth, as though to you were clear
All hidden meanings. For a little while
We walk with you in Beauty's path and see
For just an hour, another shining world
Sans pain — where dwells the soul of Harmony.

TRAVELERS

Together we follow the beckoning road
That calls at the break of day,
The whole wide world is our abode,
With love to lead the way.

In spring-sweet valleys, lush and green,
Over many a towering hill,
By rushing rivers and lakes serene,
We wander where we will.

We feel not the blast of the winter storm,
We laugh at the whirling snow,
For love is with us to keep us warm,
And our hearts are all aglow.

We watch from the shore of the sapphire sea,
The flash of many a sail;
And the far lands call to you and me,
So we follow the beckoning trail.

Together we wander where desert sands
Are white 'neath the burning sun;
And we lie 'neath the sky of Orient lands,
When the garish day is done.

Whatever the season, whatever the clime,
Wherever our feet may stray,
We reck not of either space or time,
With love to lead the way.

A SOUL IN BRONZE

Before this noble head of sculptured bronze,
    Spectators pause and fix their wondering gaze
Upon those high-bred features, then break forth
    In whispered murmurs of spontaneous praise.
This bronze is more than just a work of art,
    For cunning hands have done their task so well,
Bringing to life the vision in the clay,
    It seems the sculptor wrought a miracle.
And to our kindling gaze there is revealed
    The spirit of a man who knows no fear,
A spirit strong and yet compassionate,
    A conquering soul, seeing the pathway clear
To noble deeds, well-done; a gallant soul
    As far above its fellows as a star
Above the earth; an upward-winging soul,
    Inspiring to mankind as angels are.

FRANCESCA IN THE GARDEN, SPEAKS TO PAOLO

"Baciami gl'occi, e le guance e le tempie, e la gola, cosi', cosi', — " d'Annunzio — Francesca de Rimini

See, Beloved, the twilight fades,
    Stars gleam out in the velvet sky;
Night falls, and the silent kindly dark
    Reigns in the garden where you and I
Walk together. A crescent moon
    Glows in the west; a lone bird sings
A piteous note. Around us move
    Myriad shadows like fluttering wings.

Calm is the wonderful summer night —
    The scent of the roses is heavy and sweet;
Their fragrance thrills me like magic wine
    And my pulses throb with a rythmic beat.
I raise my lips to your waiting kiss
    That fills my veins with a living flame,
And all the music that angels know
    I hear in your voice when you breathe my
        name.

Our souls have met, and meeting, loved,
As they met and loved in the centuries past;
For our love has endured since the world began,
And will last while time itself shall last.
Our souls will meet in the ages to come,
Will meet and love again and again;
Together we'll travel through starry space
Far from the haunts of scornful men.

These lips that are warm with your kisses tonight,
This body will moulder and crumble away;
But the soul that loves you, the soul that you love,
Will outlive all of its prisons of clay.
In each existence's little span,
In every life that we live, my own,
You will seek me and find me, your one true mate,
We will meet and love, for our souls are one.

Tonight, this golden enchanted night,
Is ours. The lone bird's piteous note
Dies into silence. . . . Your kisses burn
On my trembling lips, my eyes, my throat.
Tonight, in this garden, we live and love —
Unmindful we, or the scorn of men . . .
In hell or heaven, 'tis all the same
With you beside me — kiss me again!

MONA LISA

The unenlightened say they cannot read
    The riddle of your gentle baffling smile,
Fair Lisa, and to them your curved lips
    Reveal but chill disdain and woman's guile.
The few who understand may read aright
    Your secret, Giaconda, and they know
You gained your greater knowledge when you walked
    In Leonardo's garden long ago.
Your smile reveals a pity half divine
    For those frail ones who walk the primrose way
And call it love, nor ever care to know
    That love is not an attribute of clay,
But only of the soul; this is the great
    Abiding truth Da Vinci taught you well,
And those who do not know the perfect love,
    Can only call your smile inscrutable.

TO THE MEMORY OF R. G.

We will not weep for him, but just be glad
    He walked the earthly road a little while,
And brought to countless lonely hungry hearts,
    A glimpse of beatuy with his magic smile.
We spoke with admiration, nay, with awe,
    About his life — his rise to fame — his art,
Transcending art itself — but still he seemed
    A being set a little way apart;
He seemed a spirit from a higher sphere
    Imprisoned for a time in mortal clay,
And those who loved and understood him best
    Would not have breathed one prayer to have
        him stay.
No more an earth-bound god, he has returned
    To some bright country where his soul will
        dwell
Peace-wrapt forever — so our hearts may know
    A little comfort, since for him all's well.

RECOMPENSE

I have nothing to fear from the coming years,
    Let them bring either grief or despair;
Let hunger tear with sharpened fangs,
    At my flesh that was once so fair;
Let Time with fingers relentless and stern,
    Take all of my beauty away —
I shall laugh at whatever the years may bring:
    I have lived for a little day.

I have heard the blithesome notes of the lark
    As he sang in the early dawn;
I have watched the gleam of the evening star
    When the sun's last rays were gone;
I have stood on the shore and felt on my face
    The sting of the ocean spray —
Let the coming years bring what they will;
    I have lived for a little day.

I have kept in my heart a golden dream,
    (What though I have walked alone?)
I have dreamed of the clasp of a loving hand,
    And dear eyes meeting my own;
And my dream is a treasure that endless time
    Cannot change or take away —
Whatever the coming years may bring,
    I have loved for a little day.

MAGIC

Shabby little houses
    Standing in a row,
Porches leaning crookedly,
    What a wretched show!
Little peering windows
    Seem to wink and say,
"Mirth and joy and beauty
    Never walk this way."
No flowers in the door-yards,
    Here no shade trees grow —
Only shabby houses
    Standing in a row.
But from a shabby doorway
    Steps forth a little bride,
Her smiling face is radiant,
    Her lover at her side —
And lo! the mean and shabby street
    Is changed and glorified.

THE ROAD TO HEART'S CONTENT

With soul an-hungered, I searched in vain
For the path to Heart's Content,
And I followed many a toilsome road
Till the weary day was spent.

I answered the glances of tender eyes,
I followed the lure of gold,
I read my name in the Hall of Fame,
But ever my heart was cold.

I found no sign-board pointing the way
To aid in my eager quest,
And I found no spot where my tired soul
Could dwell in blissful rest.

At night, when, wearied, I turned toward home,
The stars sang a message true,
And I found that the road to Heart's Content,
Is the road that leads to you.